

Training Challenges for the U.S. Army in the Pacific

by

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Abstract

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In 2011, with the drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan freeing resources, President Obama approved a strategy shifting or “pivoting” US strategic focus to the Pacific. US military interests in the Pacific are not one dimensional. They cross the scope of the elements of national power: diplomacy, information, as well as economic concerns. This operating environment is complex and will bring special training challenges to the United States Army in the Pacific. Army units will be required to operate in a Joint environment, often with Intergovernmental, Interagency and Multinational partners with disparate mission command capabilities. Multinational exercises and simulation supported training can enhance training and mitigate shortfalls due to distance and decreased funding. This paper will address specific aspects of Army training in the United States Pacific Command Area of Responsibility. It will conclude with recommendations on how Army commanders can enhance existing capabilities as well as develop new training opportunities.

Training Challenges for the U.S. Army in the Pacific

Accordingly, while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region.

—Sustaining Global Leadership:
Priorities for 21st Century Defense

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the United States has been a Pacific power. The US has thousands of miles of Pacific coastline and many shared alliances in both the northern and southern Pacific hemispheres. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, US intent has been to shift strategic focus and military resources to those regions. The Global War on Terrorism preempted that policy in 2001.

In 2011, with the drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan freeing resources, President Obama approved a strategy shifting or “pivoting” US strategic focus to the Pacific.¹ The task of carrying out this policy for the Asia-Pacific region will fall primarily to the Commander, United States Pacific Command (USPACOM). One of his greatest challenges is to train effectively in an area that is culturally diverse, politically and environmentally unstable and geographically dispersed. The requirement to train in this environment within projected fiscal restraints will drive change and innovation into commander’s training strategies.

Each military service component has United States Code Title 10 responsibility to train its troops. Given the maritime nature of the environment, Army commanders, especially, will face new training challenges in the Pacific. To counter these challenges, Army Commanders must find ways to develop new, or enhance existing training opportunities leveraging all assets to include the increased use of simulations, Joint and Multinational exercises with due consideration to operations in an emerging cyber-

environment. Army training is normally addressed at the tactical or operational level. However, given the current tensions in the Pacific Area of Responsibility (AOR), Army training readiness is a strategic issue, a constant concern for both the PACOM commander and the decision makers in Washington. This paper will address Army specific aspects of training in the USPACOM AOR. Gaining an understanding of the Operational Environment (OE) is the first step.

The Operating Environment

The United States Army forces in the Pacific AOR fall under the purview of the USPACOM, one of six regional combatant commands in the Department of Defense. The USPACOM AOR contains 36 countries and covers approximately 50% of the earth's surface area and about 60% of the earth's population.



Figure 1: Countries in the United States Pacific Command Area of Responsibility

To train effectively, commanders must understand the level of complexity and the scope and the magnitude of the geographical area of operation and the complexity of the cultures of the people living there. In other words units must understand the

environment. Understanding United States priorities in the area is a good place to start the analysis.² The USPACOM mission is: "...together with other US government agencies is to protect and defend United States, its territories, allies and interests; alongside allies and partners promote regional security and deter aggression and if deterrence fails, be prepared to respond to the full spectrum of military contingencies to restore Asia-Pacific stability and security."³ In answer to the question "to what end?" the strategic end-state of the United States is that its territories and interests are protected and the Asia Pacific region is stable and secure. The USPACOM commander's focus is on strengthening alliances and partnerships, working to mature the US China military-military relationship, develop the US India strategic partnership, remain prepared to respond to a Korean Peninsula contingency and counter trans-national threats.⁴ In summary, the United States wants to gain or increase our influence in the region to remain relevant on the international stage and able to advance US interests.

Military interests are not one dimensional. They cross the scope of the elements of national power: diplomacy, information, as well as economic concerns. These interests take into account the rapid population, military, and economic growth in the region as well as the changing nature of the threats in North East, South, and South East Asia. This is the environment the USPACOM commander, and his components must train for.

Training Challenges

Training is not the sole domain of the Generating Force institutions that initially prepare and educate soldiers for duty. Nor is training solely the responsibility of the Operating Force commanders to which these soldiers are assigned.⁵ A recent Army

Capabilities Integration Center gap analysis study showed training capability gaps at all levels.⁶ Regardless, both the Operating Force and the Generating Force will have to work together to meet the #1 near-term imperative of the Army as described in the Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2013:

*(Near-Term) Train for Operational Adaptability. Operational adaptability is the ability to shape conditions and respond effectively to a changing operational environment with appropriate, flexible and timely actions. All units will train for combined arms proficiency, and then develop regional and cultural expertise in support of regional alignment. This approach requires emphasis on the human dimension's cognitive, physical and social components as they relate to mission command and training as a Total Force, leveraging live-virtual-constructive capabilities. Regionally aligned forces require specialized language, regional and cultural expertise. The Army must reinforce deployment and decisive action training at combat training centers and home stations. This imperative enables the Army to broaden the scope of competence in land combat.*⁷

The training required by this imperative must be relevant, adaptable, true to unchanging fundamentals and take advantage of technology. In terms of relevance, the training must reflect the current operating environment. That environment will be characterized by Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIIM) operations.

Training for Operations in a JIIM Environment is not a new concept for the Army. For the last 12 years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States military has operated in JIIM environment. Legally US forces have been required to operate jointly since the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Effectively, operational needs during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) drove the requirement to act as an integrated force. Army soldiers learned to work with multinational partners and to include enablers from interagency and intergovernmental personnel. Lessons learned from these conflicts have shown the value of using all available assets. We have learned to operate in this manner, but only on a relatively narrow mission set and range

of skills. This is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. After 12 years of war, institutionalizing that training will be new in application and employment.⁸ Several factors drive this condition, National policy being the primary factor.⁹ An effort to frame the training problem highlights an environment that will require the coordinated efforts of all available resources.¹⁰ These resources may include multiple disparate organizations. Problems arise when these organizations have internal means of operation and communication that are different than that of the higher headquarters designated to synchronization operations.

Training Challenges: Mission Command in a JIIM Environment

The Army in the Pacific does not have the luxury of training as a discrete entity. Training in and for a complex environment is demanding work. It requires detailed, meticulous planning and coordination where all available assets are brought to bear on the resolution of a problem. The current USPACOM commander calls this the “whole of government approach.”¹¹ He cites an example where US Customs and Border Protection officers team with US Drug Enforcement Agency and US Navy personnel to combat smuggling and piracy in the South China Sea.¹²

The problems inherent in this type of operation are that all of these agencies do not traditionally work or communicate with each other on a frequent enough basis to be thought of as “interoperable.” All the parties involved have different standard operating procedures.¹³ All have different command and control technologies and all have different procedures to plan, prepare, coordinate and synchronize operations.

Most importantly, there is no standard data communications network dedicated to training and operations. Digital Command and Control (C2) or Mission Command

system interoperability is a DoD level problem, not an Army institutional training problem. But, saying it is “someone else’s problem” does not fix it. Joint Task Force tactics, techniques and procedures are eventually developed but they take time and amount to a band aid as opposed to a real solution on how to coordinate, synchronize and direct operations in a JIIM environment.

The problem of effective command and control is linked to “mission command.” In this context, command and control refers to the tools used by commanders and staffs to communicate and direct action. The problem is that there are few common languages. The Network Internet Routed Protocol (NIPR, unclassified) and Secure Internet Routed Protocol (SIPR, classified) networks are common to most of the services. However, the Navy, for example, uses the SEAGULL network for some operations. To confound the problem, some networks are for training but not operations; some are used for both. The Army commonly uses the CENTRIX, CENTRIX-ISAF, CENTRIX-T networks, for example.

Nonstandard networks are complemented in their dysfunction by nonstandard situational awareness tools – both voice and data. For example, Army C2 systems are different than Navy C2 systems which are all different from the Air Force systems. Expensive application program interface software that allows the systems to interact and share C2 data is difficult to engineer and expensive to maintain. Training is a challenge as the skills needed to operate these systems degrade over time.

Integrating disparate organizations with different communications systems, then synching subsequent operations will be a commander’s biggest internal challenge. His biggest external challenge will be to learn to work and train with multinational partners.

Training Challenges: Building Partner Capacity

There is a common understanding that one of the keys to success in an AOR is relationships. Relationships, built over time, facilitate cooperation and infer a positive outcome of a desired action. These relationships often foster a spirit of cooperation and allow contingency plans to come together quickly and effectively. As a part of its mission, USPACOM is charged with fulfilling the following mutual defense treaties signed by the United States that help build that spirit of cooperation:¹⁴ The U.S. and the Republic of the Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty of 1952; the U.S., Australia and New Zealand Mutual Defense Treaty of 1952; the U.S. and the Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954; the U.S. and Japanese Mutual Defense Treaty of 1960; and the U.S. and Thailand signed the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty in 1954. Within these treaties, though the other services are certainly represented, the US Army Pacific has an important and robust part to play.



Figure 3: US Mutual Defense Alliances

A common misperception is that the Army will have to train to fight China in the Pacific AOR. True, the US may have to engage in crisis response and limited contingency operations with China.¹⁵ But, the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) has cautioned against the notion that a rise in the fortunes of China correlate to a decline for those of the US. In May of 2012, GEN Dempsey warned against the U.S. falling into what he calls a “Thucydides trap.” The trap, he said, goes something like this:

...it was Athenian fear of a rising Sparta that made war inevitable. Well, I think that one of my jobs as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and as an advisor to our senior leaders, is to help avoid a Thucydides trap. We don’t want the fear of an emerging China to make war inevitable.”¹⁶

Perhaps the lack of trust between the US and China is the true root problem to peace in the area. America “gets along” with Japan. We are allies and partners in both trade and security. That atmosphere of trust does not exist between the US and China. The USPACOM Commander, especially in this particular case, has a unique opportunity to cultivate a climate of trust between the United States and the nations of the region. One way to do that is through bi-lateral or multilateral training exercises.

Multinational training exercises, such as COBRA GOLD with Thailand demonstrate a way to enhance military-to-military relationships with allies and potential partners in the geographic region. These types of exercises build trust between partner nations and highlight the US’s key leadership role in the region. The obvious benefit comes from the opportunity to interact and build new or enhance existing relationships,

both personal and official. These relationships facilitate efficient and effective socialization of us policy, interests and goals.

In conjunction with our allied partners, USPACOM troops will continue to train with other nations in the USPACOM AOR. Yudh Abhyas is a bilateral training exercise supporting peacekeeping operations sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific and the India Army¹⁷. These partnered exercises are growing in scope. Army troops from around the Pacific, both from the Active Component as well as the Reserves and National Guard, have participated in joint exercises with partner nations such as India, Thailand, and the Philippines.

The increase in such partnered training can be a significant strategic “talking point” for senior officials as they set conditions for a successful rebalancing. Partnering will also require a change in the way the US Army conducts training, since it will have to be much more participative and cooperative as opposed to dictating to partnered nations how exercises will be conducted. The US will have to incorporate the training objectives and styles of others in order to achieve the strategic effect of building true trust and partnership in the Pacific.¹⁸

Live\Instrumented Training.

The USPACOM ground forces (Army and Marine Corps) face different training challenges than they did years ago. Both have spent the last 12 years operating in a counter insurgency (COIN) and stability environment. These types of tasks were given parity with offensive and defensive operations under the doctrine of Full Spectrum Operations¹⁹. This doctrine was confusing to many and conflicted with longstanding beliefs about what the Army should and should not be used for. New policy will direct

Army operation to return to a more traditional view of its roles and missions. This shift is captured in the doctrine of Unified Land Operations (ULO). The main premise is that the Army is built to be able to seize retain, and exploit the initiative in order to gain an advantage in sustained land operations.²⁰ The concept of ULO is not exclusive of COIN and stability operations. Rather, it is inclusive of full spectrum operations which was lacking in previous doctrine. The concept is based on the premise that the Army cannot sustain proficiency in every conceivable training environment. Instead, leaders will focus on critical skills that apply across a broad range of training scenarios and environments.²¹

One of the ways to train those skills is at a Combat Training Center (CTC) like the National Training Center (NTC), Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) or the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC). However, the Army's resources for large scale NTC-like training exercises are diminishing. The availability of land is always an issue, especially in the Pacific. Training areas there are either small or non-existent. Strategic airlift from the region is often cost prohibitive. The 196th Infantry Brigade trains and certifies all US Army Pacific (USARPAC) units. A 196th budget assessment study showed that deployments of Pacific based troops to CONUS training centers cost up to three times what stateside units paid for the same training.²²

However, there are efforts underway at USARPAC that will facilitate, enhance and increase current training capability with application at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. For example, USARPAC is in the process of implementing the Joint Pacific Multi-Regional Capability (JPMRC) system in late FY14. This capability was developed in response to a requirement for a deployable instrumentation package

similar to the ones found at the NTC and JRTC. The Vice Chief of Staff of the Army approved the vision and concept for the JPMRC in January of 2013.²³ The concept is consistent with the National Security Strategy Pacific focus and enhances USARPAC Forces relevance to USPACOM. Effectively it places a deployable training capability at the disposal of the Commander, USARPAC. This capability will enhance training at the regional and multinational level.

This implementation of the JPMRC is a phased. The next milestone is the fielding of the Exportable Training Center Instrumentation System (ETC-IS) to USARPAC. USARPAC will use the ETC-IS to train troops in a “Live” environment. Exercises are planned for Oahu this summer. The first test of this concept will come in 4QFY14 with the training of two BNs sequentially on Oahu using this system.²⁴ If this “proof of principle” exercise is successful, this capability may be employed throughout the USPACOM AOR to train the troops of allies and potential partner nations. If not, large (BDE +) Joint, multinational exercises like Talisman Saber in Australia may be the only training USARPAC troops get in a year.

Training Challenges: Constructive Simulations

Senior leaders across the Army recognize the potential of simulations to maximize training opportunities and effectiveness.²⁵ Simulations have value in and of themselves and have proven to increase the effectiveness of subsequent live training events. In the case of functional and multifunctional brigades, simulations training may even replace a “dirt CTC” certification event. Linking the two types of training, live and simulated, over long distances on a distributed training network is an effective way to maximize the use of training resources. The effectiveness or “proof” of this concept was

proven in Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels, Germany in March of 2012. In rotation 12-01, the 173rd Infantry BDE deployed to the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels while the 30th Medical Command deployed to the Joint Multinational Simulation Center at Grafenwoehr. The live training of the 173rd in the maneuver area in Hohenfels “drove” the simulated training scenario of the 30th MEDCOM at Grafenwoehr.

The concept of linked-distributed, simulation supported exercises is consistent with Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) guidance to expand training opportunities within decisive action training environment. Within CONUS, plans are being made for an exercise based on this construct with the 10th Mountain Division and the JRTC in the summer of 2013.²⁶

Employing this concept in the Pacific AOR, one of the ways USARPAC envisions using this distributed simulation training capability is to have a unit train on Oahu, while another simultaneously conducts a CPX at Ft. Lewis or at Ft. Leavenworth. In this type of scenario, a BDE Cdr could control multiple formations across various AOs without putting his full BDE in the field.

The value of this type of training for regionally aligned BDEs is that they can routinely exercise staff skills as well as their command and control systems. At the strategic level, the presence of the JPMRC and the conduct of enhanced training in the Pacific sends the message to the nations of the Pacific Rim that the United States is committed to long term partnerships through exercises in the AOR.

The problem with constructive simulation exercises is that they are normally large and complex. Exercises based on large constructive simulations have high overhead in terms of facilities and the personnel required to run them. The physical footprint for a

large simulation exercise may be prohibitive in the Pacific. Specialized Simulation Centers in CONUS, Europe and Korea have these facilities. These facilities are expensive to maintain. Normally, only one CJTF-level exercise per year will be scheduled and budgeted.²⁷ If not multi-purposed, these facilities remain empty for many weeks of the year. The simulation software used to run large exercises requires a large amount of contract personnel to operate and maintain. For example, simulation support contract amount to approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the annual operating costs of the Joint Multinational Simulation Center in Grafenwoehr, Germany. It seems intuitive that part-time, on call (PTOC) contract support would be more efficient. In fact, PTOC support is expensive to the point of being cost prohibitive.²⁸ The United States Army Europe recently spent approximately \$150K for five PTOC personnel for a 4-day exercise. This type of expenditure is unsustainable given the current fiscal climate. USARPAC, like many other component commands is looking at constructive simulations as a way to mitigate the expense and availability of live training.

Simulation supported training is not without its issues. Problems or challenges have been identified across the Army community. In some cases there is disagreement on the solution. For example, should constructive simulations capability remain at home station and more responsive to the training audience? Or, should that capability be distributed and maintained from a central hub (more economical)? Should those simulations capabilities come under the responsibilities of TRADOC, the Installation Management Command (IMCOM), or Forces Command (FORSCOM)? Right or wrong, dwindling resources may drive the solution as opposed to operational requirements.

The following are some recommendations on how to answer those questions, and mitigate training challenges in USPACOM and USARPAC.

Recommendations

USPACOM has an opportunity to mitigate many of its training challenges through the use of constructive simulations.²⁹ A constructive simulation digitally creates the roles of real people and systems that are not available for live training³⁰.

Not only use simulations, but use low overhead simulations. The solution to high cost large exercises is the use of lower fidelity simulations that are less expensive to operate but still meet commanders training requirements³¹. At the strategic level, exercises are about process, procedures and synchronization. The USPACOM commander does not need to know how many tank rounds are left in A-66. Low overhead simulations are a good alternative to drive that type of training. The National Simulation Center at Fort Leavenworth is experimenting with the Army Low Overhead Training Toolkit (ALOTT)³² a low overhead training driver that may be a “good enough” application for staff drills even at the CJTF level. Economy is not mutually exclusive of function. “Good enough” solutions exist. It is a mistake to categorically describe an economical solution as less functional or lacking in a required function. ALOTT may not be the right tool\solution for USPACOM, but, a similar, low-overhead simulation capability may work well.

It is important to engineer, resource and implement a dedicated Training Network. Commanders must examine their training objectives, exercise objectives and determine what is “good enough” in terms of simulation support. Simulations distributed from a central hub require high cost transmission lines but are less expensive than a

dedicated on-site capability. The Joint Training and Exercise Network (JTEN) is a dedicated data communications backbone accessible to many units. JTEN use can mitigate the cost of data transmission. Another cost effective measure for simulation transmission is the Global Simulation Capability (GSC), an emerging technology with the National Simulation Center as the proponent.³³ The GSC will leverage existing Defense Information System Agency (DISA) network architecture to provide a persistent and reliable data communications network for training.

Standardized C2 systems are important to command and control. One of the first lessons Armor lieutenants learned was that they would have to learn to “move, shoot and communicate.”³⁴ It is still true, an unchanging fundamental, that commanders, staff and units must communicate. Disparate C2 systems hinder interoperability and effective, integrated operations. USARPAC must select a standard data communications network and complementary command and control applications for Joint operations in the Pacific. USPACOM should standardize telecommunications protocols with intergovernmental and interagency partners. The Army Modeling and Simulation community is working to create an “Integrated Training Environment” by 2018 that will support this initiative.³⁵ This effort supports the Army Training Strategy. The Department of the Army G-3/5/7-Training (DAMO-TR) has the lead; the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth and the Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation (PEO-STRI) represent the combat developer and material developer, respectively.

Digital command and control in a multinational environment is problematic. Most nations have systems and software that are not compatible with those of the

United States. In an effort to solve the issue of multinational\coalition interoperability, work between the Combined Arms Center and the Program Executive Office for Command, Control and Communications-Tactical (PEO C3T) has fielded the Joint Convergence/Multilateral Interoperability Programme (MIP). MIP program software enables Coalition commanders to exchange C2 information among countries.³⁶ MIP software has been tested with success at Combined Endeavor, a NATO C2 interoperability exercise that has shown great promise in two areas: Joint and multinational partnership building and cooperation and actual tactics, techniques, procedures and technical solutions that work at the international level.³⁷

As a component of a Joint force, the USARPAC will have the opportunity to develop and forge new partnerships. The level of complexity of international engagement, commitment to partnership and strategic importance of the countries in the USPACOM AOR varies. To some, it is a substantive exchange of ideas, people and equipment. With others it is dinner and drinks to keep the lines of communication open; it is not consistent across all countries. In a constrained resource environment we must commit to partnerships with a discreet number of Asia Pacific nations. We should select those nations on the basis with which they share our values and the degree to which they help us further our national interests. India, while not a Pacific nation, is a rising military and financial giant. India will compete with China as the greatest economic and military power in that hemisphere and could be a valuable long term US partner.

USPACOM has a large lineup of team building exercises in the Pacific: Cobra Gold(Thailand), Khaan Quest(Mongolia), Yama Sakura(Japan), Ulchi Focus Guardian(South Korea), Yudah Abbas(India), Tiger Balm(Singapore), Garuda

Shield(Indonesia), Terminal Fury(Hawaii), and Talisman Sabre(Australia). The host nations take a great deal of pride in hosting these exercises. It is seen as a measure of their prestige to host such an event. These exercises are also a key component of building partner capacity. Protecting the funding for these exercises should be a priority.³⁸

It must be a priority to resource headquarters with the adequate numbers of effective JIIM personnel augmentees for exercises. The current system used to source these critical positions is not agile and results in late or no personnel to fill key positions. Training events lose value when all the players don't show up.

Conclusion

USARPAC training personnel have a good grasp on what is required to train Unified Land Operations in a JIIM environment. They will be able to develop an education, exercise and training strategy that will meet training requirements driven by the strategic environment. Their challenge is to find the time to train in a rapidly changing environment. For the last 12 years the United States has been actively involved in war, training for a specific environment in prescriptive scenarios on a set timeline. Commander's home station training was predetermined. That environment is changing.

TRADOC schools and home station training institutions rightly focused on training the main effort for the last 12 years – the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the exception of the CG, CAC input, this paper does not address institutional schooling efforts. TRADOC training entities, like CAC-T and the National Simulation Center have been invaluable and continue to lead the way in innovative training and doctrine formulation.

Finally, embrace simulations as USARPACs primary tools for training. Live training is always preferred. But, given the nature of the environment and geographic dispersal, simulations are the only practical way to conduct exercises in a JIIM environment. Through simulations, USPACOM can economically exercise leaders at the strategic level. Simulations cannot replace live training. What simulations can do is enable units in training status to enter live events at a higher level of proficiency and experience a training event when live training is not available.

Endnotes

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